

28 November 1969

SITUATION INFORMATION REPORT

"Venceremos" means "we shall win" in Spanish. It's also supposed to mean hard work for Americans volunteering for a two-month Cuban tour of duty with the Venceremos Brigade (VB).

The Brigade allegedly materialized from a brainstorming session earlier this year between visiting Americans and Cuban Government officials and was designed ostensibly to demonstrate American radical solidarity with the Cuban revolution through participation in the 1969-1970 Cuban sugar cane harvest. Its guiding principles were published in the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) organ, New Left Notes, and are significant in that they reveal the importance of the political, rather than the economic, aspects of Brigade activity:

1. To give political, moral, and material support to Cuba for the critical sugar harvest in 1970;
2. To educate people about the international revolution against imperialism; and,
3. To gain a practical understanding of creative application of communist principles on a day to day basis.

According to the Brigade's SDS-dominated National Executive Committee (P. O. Box 643, Cathedral Station, N. Y. C.) and regional spokesmen, 300 Americans selected "on the basis of their support for Cuba and their commitment to changing the system in this country," will travel to Fidel's paradise in two groups - 150 each in November and January - to work in the canefields. (Lack of recent publicity about the November departure plus slip-page in the final filing date for applicants - originally 20 September, then revised to 30 October - seems to indicate a Brigade problem

in reaching published goals). Some later data points to an attempt to increase recruitment to 600, twice the original goal of 300 cane cutters, however, whether this is a smokescreen to allow extension of the filing date or whether it is true that the original number has been attained and more are desired is not clear at this point. Organizers are fuzzy about Brigade financing but have apparently raised several thousand dollars to defray transportation costs should the Cuban regime be unable to do so.

In keeping with the stated agrarian nature of the venture, would-be applicants are warned that the VB is all work - Brigade volunteers will live in the field, in sexually segregated barracks or tents. While free food will be provided, members will live the rigorous life of Cuban farmers and no hanky-panky will be allowed. Strict Cuban laws prohibiting use of marijuana, and other drugs will be enforced and violators will be deported.

VB leaders hope to recruit equal numbers of blacks, whites, and Latin Americans for each trip... "just average Americans who want to see what a revolutionary and socialist society is like," as one staffer put it. The bulk of volunteers is expected to be made up of SDS and Black Panther Party (BPP) members, as well as working class youths, ex-GI's, high school and university students, and drop-outs.

The stress on economic assistance to Cuba by the Brigade Committee has caused at least one U. S. official to deplore the program. Representative Ross Adair (R., Ind.) sees the program as a plot to assist Cuba economically at a time he feels U. S. economic sanctions on Fidel are just beginning to "achieve the desired result of placing such a burden on the Cuban economy that it is incapable of exporting Communist revolutions elsewhere in Latin America." In this regard the U. S. State Department is helpless to prevent the trips. It can deny people the right to travel to certain countries, but recent Supreme Court and appellate court decisions will not allow prosecution of violators. In spite of Congressman Adair's concern for economics, it's pretty clear that the Brigade's *raison d'être* is deeply political, with economic considerations playing second fiddle.

The total economic impact of 300... or 600... inexperienced city-folk (nowhere does VB literature indicate American farm youth will be recruited) on Castro's goal to double last year's 4.5-million

ton harvest has to be viewed as insignificant. If, as some observers claim, Fidel's power position is now shaky and will vacillate in relation to sugar production, it's reasonable to discount VB canecutting as a stabilizing influence. Some Cuba-watchers feel that the signs of a harvest failure are already there and that even the help of Castro's 50,000man Youth Centennial Column (created in 1968 by the Union of Young Communists to help the country's agricultural sector) cannot reach the 10-million ton goal. Recent campaigns to get high-ranking communists from behind their desks and into the cane-fields is one indicator of Fidel's anxiety about the crop. And even visiting VIP's, like the People's World writer Robert P. Kaufman, have been asked to donate time in the fields. Another signal is stepped-up propaganda describing the growing "CIA-instigated canefield fire and sabotage program."

It's doubtful that any evidence of impending crop problems in Cuba would deter Brigade leaders from their plans; potential political gains far outweigh the economic considerations. Logically, it has to be expected that American radicals will be afforded political indoctrination, a la Castro-style communism, as well as intensive training in such esoteric skills as agitation, propaganda, sabotage and guerrilla warfare. Besides the publicity value which the American presence gives both hosts and visitors, it's a reasonable assumption that one of the real motives of the trip... for the Americans... is to develop a cadre sophisticated in all the arts of revolution. Cuba-loving BPP and SDS members will have little trouble getting top grades.

At this writing there is no data on who will be in the Brigade. Only the organizing leaders have been identified... SDSers Mike Klonsky, Julie Nichamin and Karen Ashley; Arlene E. Bergman, from the radical The Movement; Chicago Newsreel's Jerry Long; Allen Young, of Liberation News Service; LaRaza's Al Martinet; John McAuliff, from the Committee of Returned Volunteers; and David Dellinger of Liberation Magazine and "Chicago 8" fame.

While some of the leaders may accompany the Brigade, other members are unknown at this time. It's difficult to expect that leaders will be able to recruit many of the politically unsophisticated "average" persons they insist they want. The time factor alone presents a serious problem. Few high school or college students could stand a two-month vacation from class (even if school authorities gave permission) and only the most sympathetic of employers would release a worker for that length of time. Brigade members,

it would logically follow, will most likely be professional radicals... those with full-time positions in the movement... or come from self-employed professional groups such as physicians, lawyers, dentists, journalists, etc. Scholars able to obtain leave or on sabbaticals, are prime candidates as well as people at the other end of the economic spectrum... the unemployed or partially unemployed. Further refinement of categories would be pure guesswork, but even with this limited analysis, it's predictable that Brigade members will contain very few "average" people. It's more likely to be filled with established radicals of the New Left and Black Power movements, eager to hone their techniques... to develop revolutionary skills... and to return to their native land determined to destroy that land "by whatever means necessary."

The intransigent "Old Left" is still in trouble. Latest victim in the continuing struggles inside socialist organizations... to reconcile differences between basic principles and today's brand of U. S. radicalism... is the Socialist Labor Party (SLP). Never a large or influential party, SLP is splitting... again! And for the same reason as before; its failure to adapt, to cope with and relate to the main currents of America's leftism.

In 1931 it was a similar story - SLP would not join with the then burgeoning trade union movement which was sweeping the country. It was content to sit on the sidelines, shouting "fraud" at workers' gains, since in the view of SLP father-figure Daniel DeLeon, such gains were reformist... capitalist crumbs, dispensed to workers via corrupt labor leaders to still legitimate worker demands against capitalist management. Today's SLP rebels faced the same problem. SLP leadership refused to join with modern leftists and militants: it refused to join in "mass" actions.

Eric Hass, the most notable defector, served SLP for over forty years: since 1938 as the editor of the party organ, The Weekly People. He resigned in April. A portion of his resignation rationale, quoted below, is noteworthy in that it reveals just how deeply the stimulation and potential of the New Left... of black power militancy... has stirred members of the old guard.

"I am personally convinced that there are SLP members who are secretly at odds with the National Office over its hostile attitude toward the Vietcong and toward anti-war protesters. I believe there

are SLP members who disagree with the party's antagonistic attitude toward militant blacks and radical student movements, and who believe that, instead of trying to keep the party 'pure' and antiseptic by forbidding any contact with such groups, the party ought to be wrestling with the question: How can we get SLP ideas across to them?

"And there are members who have misgivings over both the erosion of party democracy and the intellectual stultification that is a logical consequence of the substitution of dogma for dialectics, and indoctrination for education."

From this type of blanket condemnation by a long-time party faithful, it's pretty obvious the debate in SLP councils has been concluded. Its leaders have taken refuge again in sectarian DeLeonism, something younger members are unable to stomach. To them, New Left gains and black militancy are waves of the future, not to be ignored by true socialists.

While Hass and other dissenters will form new splinter groups, and join in this wave, it seems safe to predict that SLP can be written off as a viable member of America's left. It failed to learn from its mistakes of the 1930's... and its current policy places it outside the circle of influential (albeit insidious) radical movements today. It's difficult to view SLP as anything but a wholly isolated sect unable to relate to other activist groups or movements.



"IT'S PRESIDENT NIXON ASKING IF WE HAVE ROOM FOR HIM ON THE NEXT MOON FLIGHT?" Daily World (Communist) 10/25/67



Daily World (Communist) "Brinkley and Bluntly"

Allegorical in The Economic Star

CALENDAR OF TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Asterisked items are either reported for the first time or contain additions or changes to previously reported activities.

\*November 27-30, New Orleans, La.

SDS to hold southern regional conference. Invitations to conference distributed to many SDS contacts throughout southern states. Discussion topics to include drugs, affiliation with National SDS, moratorium and mobilization. (HICK 9.3.30 11/27/69)

\*November 28-30, St. Louis, Mo.

Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) to hold midwest socialist conference at Shelden Memorial Hall. Chicago YSA members expected to participate. Discussions on "Liberation struggles," "Revolutionary strategy for the student movement" planned. (HICK 9.3.30 11/28/69)

November 29, New York City

All day conference: "Agencies of Social Change - Toward a Revolutionary Strategy for Advanced Industrial Countries." Sponsored by the Socialist Scholars Conference and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation of America, Inc. (COOPER 11-18-69)

\*December, Boston Area

Reportedly, the militant Weatherman faction of SDS in the Boston area is making plans to take action within the next two weeks against certain buildings in the Cambridge, Mass., area. This action will reportedly be violent, but the nature of the violence has not been reported. The buildings mentioned were the Instrumentation Laboratory at M.I.T. and the East Cambridge District Court Building. (FBI 11 9.3.146)

\*December 1

Reportedly, an invitation has been received from Hanoi for three members of the Women Strike for Peace organization to visit North Vietnam. Cora Weiss, Ethel Taylor, and Madeline Dunnes are scheduled to make the trip. (FBI 11 9.3.146)



Also during the third day of the trial, which saw the arrest of defence lawyers Tigar and Lefcourt and the issuance of an order that Kennedy and Roberts be brought to Chicago from California, Black Panther leader Bobby Seale was sternly reprimanded from the bench when he announced in court that if he were denied the constitutional right of legal defense of his choice, he could "only see Judge Hoffman as a blatant racist". Seale has insisted that the trial be postponed until such time as west coast attorney Charles R. Garry, who often represents the Black Panthers, recuperates from a gall bladder operation and is able to represent him; but the Supreme Court, as well as Judge Hoffman, has denied continuance of the case because of Garry's incapacity.

Over the weekend of the 27th-28th, a group of lawyers from throughout the country gathered in Chicago to protest the arrest of the four defense lawyers and on Monday, the 29th, fifty appeared at the courthouse to present their protest. Later in the day, after holding a press conference, this group, whose spokesman is Victor Rabinowitz of New York, President of the National Lawyers Guild, selected a committee to draw up impeachment charges against Judge Hoffman. The group, which will be called "The Ad Hoc Committee of Lawyers to Stop the Trial of the Conspiracy 8", hopes to attract at least five hundred attorneys to Chicago on 7 October to protest "the political-legal repression which is occurring in this trial". (Simultaneously, the San Francisco Branch of the NLG was demonstrating, and demanding Judge Hoffman's impeachment, and announced that it is sponsoring a massive demonstration at San Francisco on 13 October to protest the trials.)

Within the courthouse, on this fourth day of the trial, defense attorney Kunstler submitted a motion in the U. S. District Court that Judge Hoffman should either declare a mistrial or disqualify himself because of his treatment of the defense lawyers; and U. S. Attorneys claimed that the defendants and their lawyers were attempting to try the case in the newspapers rather than in the courtroom. The motion for a mistrial, which was denied by Judge Hoffman, was reportedly based on a newspaper story that Judge Hoffman while in an elevator on his way to the courtroom after a noon break, said in the presence of Washington Post columnist Nicholas von Hoffman: "Now we are going to hear this wild man Weinglass." (Leonard I. Weinglass, a defense attorney scheduled to deliver an opening statement in the case that afternoon). It was reported that von Hoffman was subpoenaed by the defense but that Judge Hoffman stated he did not wish to hear him. Meanwhile, the Judge removed contempt of court charges against the four defense lawyers and permitted them to withdraw from the case.

On Tuesday, September 30th, Judge Hoffman ordered the jury sequestered in a downtown hotel following indications that two jurors had been threatened. The threatening letters, to two female jurors, signed "The Black Panthers", were examined by the Judge in his chambers together with prosecution and defense lawyers; and thereafter, six of the eight defendants charged at a news conference that they were "phony" and part of a continuing government effort to "frame" them. Bobby Seale issued a separate statement denying that his Party had sent the letters and he accused the "Fascist Government" of doing it "because they know that the rotten racist Hoffman has made them look bad". Seale announced in the early afternoon that he had ordered the Black Panther Party to "shut down the trial"; and following that announcement, and against their lawyers' advice, he and Tom Hayden informed the news media that they were calling for a demonstration by the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party to "shut down the trial". Hayden also claimed that Federal authorities had tampered with the jury and that defense attorneys would call for a mistrial.

On Wednesday, October 1st, one of the two jurors who received a threatening letter was excused from the jury when she replied in the negative when asked (after reading the letter in court) if she could still be a fair and impartial juror. The letter, which read "You are being watched" and was signed "The Black Panthers", had been turned over to the FBI by her family; and questioning by Judge Hoffman revealed that the woman had not previously seen it.

Defense attorney Kunstler immediately objected and accused Judge Hoffman of having "led" the juror into saying she could no longer be impartial. The objection was overruled and the twenty-three year old juror was replaced by a twenty-two year old woman, the first alternate juror.

At a noon recess news conference, defendant Dave Dellinger accused the Government of having succeeded in "sandbagging one of the jurors of whom they were afraid"; and stated that it "adds up to collusion between the judge and the Government to deprive us of a fair and impartial juror". Because of her youth, the defense had considered her one of the jurors most likely to be favorable to their case, which will rely, to a degree, on an explanation of the "new youth culture" and the political and social views of young dissidents. The defendants had to concede, however, that the replacement actually lowered the average age of the jury.

The second juror who received a threatening letter remained on the jury, as she stated that it would not affect her ability to be

impartial and she thought it was her duty to remain. A third juror, who had been told of the letter by the second, said she too would remain impartial and she too was retained.

As has been indicated, a number of potentially "big" demonstrations are being sponsored for the coming weeks of the Conspiracy 8 trial, including one for which the Progressive Labor Faction of SDS has been granted a permit to allow 3000 to demonstrate, at noon on 4 October at Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park, Chicago. To date, however, demonstrations on behalf of "the 8" which one of their spokesmen claimed would be "a combination of the Scopes trial, revolution in the street, the Woodstock Festival, and People's Park all rolled into one", have (happily) failed to reach such proportions; and several Conspiracy members have indicated their disappointment in the results so far. The largest turn-out was one of about 3000, two-thirds of whom were black youths. It may be, as one of the Conspiracy 8 said, that the Government's big mistake was "bringing Bobby (Seale) into the trial. It is the same as doubling our support, our constituency. The Blacks wouldn't have been too concerned otherwise. But now they are leading the demonstrations."

\*December 3-5, Cambridge, Mass.

A National Conference on Social and Economic Convention will be held at M. I. T. The conference is sponsored jointly by the Science Action Coordinating Committee and the Fund for New Priorities in America.

Participants will allegedly include: Prof. John Gurley, Stanford University; Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Miss Freedom Democratic Party; Sen. Thomas Eagleton of Missouri; Prof. Noam Chomsky, M. I. T.; Prof. Seymour Melman, Columbia University; James Haughton, Fight Back Harlem; and Rep. Edith Green of Oregon.

\*December 4, Seattle, Washington

The Weatherman faction of SDS at the University of Washington is reportedly planning to "destroy" ROTC on the campus. Details of the attack on ROTC facilities on that date have not been disclosed, but it will coincide with a meeting of the faculty senate of the University, which is to discuss the ROTC issue.

\*December 9, Washington, D. C.

Militant black Robert F. Williams has stated that he has received a subpoena to appear before the Senate subcommittee on Internal Security. Williams is reputedly resigning as president of the black extremist separatist Republic of New Africa and has indicated that it is because of disagreements with another RNA leader but that he will do "whatever black people ask."

\*December 13-14, Cleveland, Ohio

The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam will meet to decide the future of the antiwar coalition. Participants will include the 100-odd members of the steering committee, and they will probably ratify a recent decision by New Mobe's executive committee that the organization "has a future" and will consider detailed plans for new antiwar demonstrations.

December 20, International

In Helsinki in August 1969, at the World Meeting of Solidarity of Youth and Students with Vietnam, attended by young people from 78 countries, among three documents adopted was one containing

recommendations for national youth organizations and movements to conduct a world-wide campaign of action of the youth and students in support of the Vietnamese people and its struggle for independence, freedom and peace. Mass activities on December 20 - the day of establishment of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, "must become a culmination of all the mass action conducted in the most diverse forms," it declared.

December 27-30, Minneapolis, Minnesota

National Convention of Young Socialists being held by YSA at the University of Minnesota.

*(supplication 11-13-69)*

\*January 9-11, 1970, Chicago, Illinois

The CPUSA has disseminated a document entitled "A Call to Found a Revolutionary Working Class Youth Organization." The founding convention of this new Marxist-Leninist Youth organization was originally scheduled for December 26-28, 1969. Later materials indicate it is now planned for January 1970.

*FBI (7) Analysis 10-3-69  
11-22-69*

\*January 19, 1970, Bel Air, Maryland

H. Rap Brown, head of the Student National Coordinating Committee, who has been free on \$10,000 bond in connection with charges stemming from racial disorders in July 1967 on Maryland's Eastern Shore, is tentatively scheduled to be tried on 19 January 1970. William B. Kunstler, Brown's attorney to defend him on the charges of arson and inciting to riot, is also chief counsel for the Chicago Eight.

*WASH. Post 11-5/69*

SOURCE: Government and news media.

RELIABILITY: Probably true.